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FOREIGN AND INSULAR.

AUSTRALIA.

Plague situation in Sydney.

[Communicated by Department of State.]

SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, *May 9, 1900.*

SIR: I would respectfully inform you that the bubonic plague is still with us in Sydney, though it seems now to be declining, not only in the number of cases, but in its virulence. The invasion of this colony by the disease has very materially affected general business, and trade between the colonies has suffered out of all proportion in the seriousness of the outbreak, as measured either by the number of cases or the number of deaths.

The authorities are thoroughly awake to the necessity of drastic measures, but there is an apathy among the people quite inexplicable, considering the education and general intelligence of the community.

The following is a copy of my remarks on to-day's bill of health per steamship *Mariposa*:

The bubonic plague has been continually present in Sydney since January 24 last. It is said to be in a mild form. Up to the 1st day of March there had been 5 cases and 2 deaths. Since the 1st of March there have been 192 cases and 61 deaths. During the seventy days in which the 61 have died of plague about 859 have died from other causes.

There are drastic measures being enforced to stamp out the disease, and there is now a decline in the number of new cases reported. The sensation in the other colonies has intensified the desire of Sydney people to prevent the spread of the plague, and on all steamers every possible precaution is being used to that end.

The American vessels are carefully fumigated after docking, and then they are moored off from the wharves, the gangways are carefully watched, cables tarred and tinned, the crews kept under close observation, and no animals, birds, or pets of any kind are allowed to be taken on board.

It is absolutely impracticable here to follow out the instructions laid down in our quarantine regulations. There are no appliances for the work, and the very best that can be done is too ineffective to be of value as a preventive. The best efforts are but playing with a scorpion, and increase the danger by deceptive impressions. Passengers come from other colonies, from the interior, often within a few hours of sailing, and all attempt to gather and fumigate baggage is little better than a farce. The voyage covers twenty-three days, and if danger outlasts this period it can only be warded off at the port of entry.

Respectfully,

GEO. W. BELL,
United States Consul.

HON. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE.